

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM USINT HAVANA
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS

CONFIDENTIAL HAVANA 1420

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, MILI, CG, CU, FR, GE
SUBJECT: CUBANS ON SHABA

REF: HAVANA 1389

1. FRENCH AMBASSADOR, MAY 25, BRIEFED ACTING USINT CHIEF ON HIS MAY 23 CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MALMIERCA (REFTEL) ON SHABA EVENTS. MALMIERCA STATED STRONGLY THAT CUBANS ARE NOT INVOLVED WITH KATANGESE AND THAT HAVANA WANTS CRISIS TO END AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. MALMIERCA ADDED THAT KATANGESE INCURSION IS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE AT TIME WHEN INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON RHODESIAN AND NAMIBIAN PROBLEMS. MALMIERCA FURTHER SAID THAT WESTERN INTERVENTION HAS CLEARLY POINTED UP RISK OF "INTERNATIONALIZATION" OF SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION.

2. FRENCH AMBASSADOR STATED TO US THAT HE HAS SENSE THAT LAST CUBAN HELP WAS GIVEN TO KATANGESE IN EARLY MONTHS OF 1977, BEFORE CASTRO'S TRIP THROUGH AFRICA. FRENCH AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT CUBAN OFFICIALS HAD EXPRESSED ACUTE DIS-
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APPOINTMENT TO HIM AFTER LAST YEAR'S SHABA INCURSION, DUE TO CUBANS' PERCEIVED NEED TO HALT TROOP DRAWDOWNS AND REINFORCE THEIR PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BELIEVES THAT CURRENT SHABA SITUATION PRESENTS SIMILAR PROBLEM FURTHER DELAYING ANY CUBAN MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT FROM ANGOLA. (COMMENT: ANGOLAN FOREIGN MINISTER PAULO JORGE IS QUOTED IN JUVENTUD REBELDE, MAY 23, AS SAYING

THAT SOUTH AFRICAN ATTACK ON CASSINGA MAKES IT "URGENT TO IMPROVE OUR DEFENSE MECHANISMS TO FACE NEW AGGRESSIONS" - A REQUIREMENT, PRESUMABLY HEIGHTENED BY POST-SHABA SITUATION, WHAT WILL PLACE CONTINUED MILITARY OBLIGATIONS ON CUBANS.)

3. FRENCH AMBASSADOR CONTINUED THAT, WHILE HE DOES NOT BELIEVE CUBANS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED RECENTLY, "IT IS POSSIBLE" THAT EAST GERMANS TRAINED KATANGESE AND EVEN LED THEM TO ANGOLAN BORDER ENROUTE TO KOLWEZI ATTACK. AMBASSADOR DID NOT SPECIFY SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION.

4. COMMENT: USINT TENDS TO AGREE WITH FRENCH INTERPRETATION THAT EXPRESSED CUBAN DESIRE TO END SHABA CRISIS QUICKLY IS MOTIVATED AS MUCH AS DESIRE TO REDUCE PERCEIVED THREAT TO ANGOLA AS IT IS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ZAIRE REBELS IN ABSENCE OF WESTERN TROOPS. WE SENSE THAT CUBANS, IN WAKE OF CASSINGA AND SHABA, ARE NOW A BIT SCARED AND DISORIENTED. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS AFRICA DIRECTOR OSCAR ORAMAS, AN EXTREMIST ULTRA-REVOLUTIONARY DEFENDER OF CUBA'S AFRICAN PRESENCE AND FIRST CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO ANGOLA, REMARKED TO US, HALF JOCULARLY, MAY 25, THAT IF US PRESSED VORSTER TO ALTER SITUATIONS IN NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA, CUBANS WOULD "WASH THEIR HANDS" OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

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